

Linda Clair
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FILE 4C – Afternoon discussion

Question: During the last sit, and many times, I've felt that I feel my whole body. I can feel pain and lightness, or the opposites at the same time as a whole body. Like, I am feeling this pain in my sit bones and my leg, but also there is the top part of my body where there is lightness and not that pain. And the anchor is soft and it's going on and on. Did you as a student feel the whole body, and how do you feel your body now?

Linda: I can't remember specifically. I remember certain things. I remember sitting and feeling like a rock – I felt like a rock that couldn't move, didn't want to move. So, I suppose that was the whole body thing. I still felt pain until the end – by the end I mean the big realization – and after that occasionally there was a bit of pain off and on. But it seems to have subsided now. Now it's hard to explain how I feel, it just keeps changing. I feel very grounded but not in a heavy way. When you say grounded you can think heavy, but I feel grounded in a very light way. There is an awareness of my body of course, but it's not at all like it was before. There's not a self-consciousness there where I am aware of how I think I appear. There's not that anymore, there's not a delay when I move – I don't think before I move – so the movements just happen without preparation.

Question: I perceive self-consciousness as the image of me from others.

Linda: How you think others see you, and how you see yourself too.

Question: Yes, so for me that's more like a sensation. It's more like skin on skin, I feel weird and tingly or some anxiety. You're saying you don't feel that. So, is it just the watching?

Linda: There's not even that. There's no self-reflection, I can't reflect on myself. I've got no idea what I am like, how I appear. The only way I can get some idea is if someone gives me feedback. There's no effort to try and be someone to be liked or approved of.

Question: Just like the babies sometimes.

Linda: Yes, probably a bit like a baby, with no self-reflection and no judgement. It might appear that I'm judging, and maybe occasionally I do, but really, ninety-nine percent of the time, there's not. I'm not judging myself. But I'm still me, I still do stuff.

Question: In my practice I'm just there and the reactions are becoming less and less, and sometimes they're far too subtle for me to see so I have to go deeper and feel the lesser form of anxiety. So I have

to keep fine tuning it. But even though the reactions are decreasing, the thinking is there and I can see that it's a habit.

Linda: So, when you realise you're doing it gently but firmly bring your attention back. Don't go, "I shouldn't be thinking this!" Just see it – come back to the body. It's such a deeply ingrained habit. It's more deeply engrained than anyone realises, you underestimate it. You start this practice and think, "I'm going to do it in a few years." That might happen occasionally with someone who's already done a lot of practice in some way. But really, it's going as deeply as you can into your body, and you *can't* go too deeply in. So just keep going deeper and deeper. It does become more and more subtle so you need to be stiller to see those subtleties, those very subtle movements, because you get caught up in them and don't even realise you're thinking. Suddenly you're back and then you realise what has happened. It can disguise itself in many different ways. Things that we thought weren't thoughts are actually thoughts.

Question: Even with smells sometimes the memory arises.

Linda: Yes, you remember eating chips with your family or something and then you're off. So as soon as you see it, come back. And things like that are very alluring, especially if it's a nice memory. But you'll get the other memories too, and you think they're the ones you want to get rid of but you have to treat all of them in the same way, which is very difficult. You can't say, "I want this, I don't want this."

Question: I feel eventually I'm just sitting there and whatever comes and whatever is happening, not even the lure of enlightenment or anything.

Linda: You don't sit here going, "Oh, I'm enlightened." It's not that. You just sit, when you're walking you walk, you eat, you still function in the world. You need to have some sort of interest to just make the world bearable, do things just to soften the whole thing. But it's enough just to be here, it's the most creative state. And there are times when it's just exquisite. It's so far beyond any thought or imaginings you've ever had. And that is reality – it's exquisite, it really is. Sometimes it's incredibly intense and sometimes it's not. It's not this single fixed state where you feel happy all the time or anything all the time – it's not that.

Question: I don't understand but I trust you.

Linda: So just keep doing what you're doing. You have to be really sharp and look everywhere and never assume anything.

Question: That's one of my fears – what if I get deluded and have a wrong attitude and die unenlightened.

Linda: If this is the most important thing to you, you'll get as much time as you need so don't worry about that. But put everything you can into it. And I feel like the job you have now with children is really good for you, it's done something to you.

Question: (Ascelin) I had an interesting shift yesterday, which was in combination with things happening internally and some of the beautiful discussions you had with people. It all sort of clicked and there was this beautiful moment. Thoughts were coming up and they were emotionally activating me and I was feeling stirred up, – this had happened off and on throughout the day. Then there was this moment where I was able to catch them, come back to the body as usual, and try and be with the body, and notice the dissipation of the emotional activation. The emotional anxiety sort of dissipated.

That happened a couple of times and there was this click where it felt like the body was the safest place to be. I think what had been going on was there was this block or fear of fully being present with the body. Feeling slightly safer to always have a bit of thinking there, to be able to drift off. I've been noticing in the last six months times where I've been held but inside me this subtle feeling of not being safe. Feeling like it's this thing I've probably had since a young child or a baby. Then suddenly clearly seeing that being with the body was the safest place to be, and that when thoughts triggered emotional activation, I could connect back to the body and the activation would slowly dissipate. Then it was beautiful, and all this morning I feel like I've been able to be more deeply present with the body than I have been in ages, being connected to the whole body as well. It feels like a deep constricted, anxious part of me that has been there all my life. Every now and then I can feel my whole body is pretty relaxed except for this one little knot here, which I try to open to with awareness. It feels like it shifts a little bit and then the next sit it's back again.

Linda: So when you feel that don't run away from it. Don't try and change it, get rid of it, make it feel better. Try and accept it, accept that it's there. That's the most powerful thing you can do, to accept something rather than trying to change it, do anything with it, push it away. That doesn't mean you're going to enjoy it of course – it will feel very uncomfortable. But then look at that discomfort. What's wrong with feeling a bit uncomfortable? We're so addicted to comfort, and thinking in way – really it's not – but in a way it's the ultimate comfort. "Oh, this is too much, I'll just think about something else." But when you look at it logically it's just crazy, it really is. Like you felt, you start to suffer, you start to feel really emotional.

But the key is your body. That's all you need for this practice – a body. And you'll have it for as long as you need it, so don't worry that you'll die. If you're really into this you'll get as much time as you need. So yes, the body is the key, the body is the doorway.

Question: It's beautiful to have this greater trust in my body. I didn't even realise that I didn't have it before but I see there was this subtle hesitation to really being in my body.

Linda: Well, there is this fear because you know that when you're really in your body you could die. You've facing your death head-on. And you know your body is going to die. It's this very vulnerable thing, when you look at it, it could die any minute, anything could happen. There's that great fear. But then it (your body) does start to become your security, once you accept that. P. was saying how it feels, that it starts to feel silent. There is just this incredible silence in the body, and it's incredibly beautiful. Everything comes from that and you go more and more deeply into it. There's never – from what I can see – a point where that's it, that's the end.

So keep doing what you're doing. It's all a bluff, but we believe it and we're taught to believe it. We feed it and say, "Oh, this is going to happen, that's going to happen." So, the worst that can happen – you're going to die. So what! You won't have anything to worry about then. But we worry so much about dying.

Question: It also struck me – the enticing thoughts that lead you off, on one level they're great, and then without any warning you get plunged into these awful places as well.

Linda: Yes, it seduces you, and you go, "Ah, this is nice." Then suddenly a really horrible one comes up and you go, "No, I don't want to go there." But that's what it's doing, trapping you into that.

Question: It feels like there's a newfound determination to progress with the practice after seeing that.

Linda: That's what these retreats are for. To really fuel that determination, to give you that incentive, and energy and determination to keep going.

Question: Yes, they certainly do that.

Question: (Vinnie) With the fear of death, I've looked at that a bit and like P. said, I believe you. But it seems my greater fear is how I'm going to die rather than when I'm going to die. I'm curious what you make of that. Maybe I'm kidding myself but I think I'm okay with death, but then – unless it's like this, or like that.

Linda: Well, if you thinking about it you're probably not okay with it. And we can't say. If someone told you you're going to die tomorrow you really don't know how you'd feel. And that's what this thinking thing is all about, it's all a theoretical thing. You don't really know how you'd feel if someone said, "You are going to die tomorrow." I used to look at that – what would be the best way of dying if I had a choice – but it's still just theory.

Question: (Chris) Do you have a sense of unity? Do you feel any sense of separation from whatever this whole thing is that we are part of? When I read some of the texts, or sometimes what feels true when I feel about it – I don't know what it is. You don't talk about that and I know you don't talk about god, but I want to know that other aspect of what most people consider their spiritual journey.

Linda: So, what aspect?

Question: The sense of unity, the sense of oneness with everything. It's gets described so often.

Linda: It's impossible to describe. I remember feeling the same thing. I'd hear people describe it and I had no idea what they were talking about. Because once it happens you realise it's like nothing you've ever felt before. So how can you describe something? It's like describing what something looks like to someone who's always been blind.

Question: But that is a reality for you, whatever that is?

Linda: There's just reality; I don't feel separate. But I operate quite normally, I probably appear quite normal to most people. I function, I do ordinary things. It just becomes the natural state not to feel, or want to be, separate or special. Is that good enough? You want more?

Question: I wanted more but it doesn't matter. I was curious because I haven't heard you talking about it. Not that I've heard it that way anyway.

Linda: What? Unity, everything is one?

Question: Yes, all that stuff.

Linda: Well, it's true but it's an understatement. Everything you underestimate, it's all an understatement. You can't use words in a way. The best way to express it is sitting here in silence really.

When there is no time there is no separation. There is no me or you, or yesterday or tomorrow, or this and that. There *can't* be, because there's no time. If there's space between something it means there's time, because it takes time to get from one object to another. And that goes. So, it's in *that* sense that everything is one. It's not like everything joins together. But when there is no time there is no objects. It's like the heart sutra – there is nothing – there is no time, there is no space, there is no objects. But still in this body.

But now it's time for dinner.